

REPORT BY Mr. L. GLAUERT ON THE PROCEEDINGS OF  
A CONFERENCE "TO DETERMINE WHETHER CER-  
TAIN BIRDS, ETC., SHOULD BE DECLARED VERMIN  
OR OTHERWISE."

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At the March meeting of the Royal Society Mr. J. Clark and I were appointed delegates to attend this Conference. It was held at the Rabbit Branch on March 23rd, 1921. The following persons were present:—

The Hon. C. F. Baxter,	Minister for Agriculture.
Mr. Lane-Poole,	Conservator of Forests.
Mr. Male,	Pastoralists' Association.
Mr. Shallcross,	" "
Mr. Aldrich,	Chief Inspector of Fisheries.
Mr. Hamilton,	Education Department.
Mr. Le Souef,	Director of the Zoo.
Mr. L. Glauert,	W.A. Museum, and Royal Society.
Mr. J. Clark,	Royal Society and Forestry Department
Mr. Newman,	Entomologist, Department of Agriculture.
Mr. A. Crawford,	Chief Inspector of Rabbits.
Mr. Arnold,	Assistant Inspector of Rabbits.
Mr. G. W. Wickens,	Officer in Charge of Fruit Industries.

The subjects dealt with were:—

I.—The Domestic Cat gone Wild:

Mr. Crawford said that he was responsible for having the cat gazetted as protected. There was no doubt cats did a great deal of destruction, and in certain districts were responsible for keeping the rabbits down. For a good many years past he had noticed that many of the native birds had practically disappeared, and he had very serious doubts as to the advisability of protecting the domestic cat. He referred to the great destruction that was going on in the mulga in the Upper Murchison and Gascoyne. It appeared to him that it was due to a beetle that bored into the roots. He had had some roots examined and in every case there were or had been "bardies" in them. Formerly the natives had been the principal check, but they had disappeared. Other checks were the butcher-birds, magpies, crows, etc. Most of these were now being killed by cats, as also were the other insectivorous birds, ground larks, pipits, etc., which were being destroyed wholesale.

The conclusion he had come to was that, though the cat may do a considerable amount of good in the destruction of rabbits, the evil it did was far greater. He thought that if the continual decrease, and even extermination, of our insectivorous birds continued, the insect pests would become quite as bad as the rabbit.

Mr. Clark confirmed Mr. Crawford's remarks regarding the destruction of the big mulga.

Messrs. Newman, Le Souef, Aldrich, and Hamilton joined in the discussion.

The motion "That the Domestic Cat gone wild be declared vermin" was proposed by Mr. Clark, seconded by Mr. Le Souef, and carried.

## II.—Crows, including Ravens:

Mr. Crawford said he had received a large number of applications from Roads Boards and Vermin Boards and from private individuals asking that crows should be declared vermin. This, however, had not been done because he thought that the little damage the crow did was not worth taking into consideration compared with the great amount of good it did. Investigation had shown it to be one of the most valuable insectivorous birds of Western New South Wales. It was an important factor in the destruction of blowfly maggots and carrion.

Messrs. Newman, Aldrich, Glauert, Male, Hamilton and Le Souef confirmed and extended Mr. Crawford's remarks, Mr. Male adding that the crow was valuable in picking ticks off cattle. As far as West Kimberley district was concerned he thought that crows should be protected.

The motion "That the Crow be placed on the Game List" was proposed by Mr. Crawford, seconded by Mr. Glauert, and carried.

Mr. Glauert pointed out that if a bird was placed on the Game List it did not necessarily mean that it was protected in every part of the State throughout the year. If the crow were simply placed on the Game List it would still be possible to approach the Department and have it protected for, say, six or nine months of the year.

Mr. Aldrich said that if in a particular district the inhabitants wanted to destroy crows they could put in an application for permission to do so.

## III.—Wallabies and Tammars:

Mr. Crawford said that a great number of complaints had been received from the Augusta, Denmark, and Manjimup districts, and also from the South-West District Vermin Board, but

action could not be taken as the Fisheries Department declined to declare wallabies vermin. For many years the country between Denmark and Yallingup had been the principal breeding ground of the dingo. The Department had taken extreme measures against dingoes during the last two or three years, and had destroyed some five or six thousand. Dingoes, which were a natural check on the wallabies and tammars, had been removed, and the latter were now increasing enormously. In many places it was impossible to grow vegetables and potatoes, and in the drier time of the year the wallabies bark the fruit trees.

Mr. Glauert pointed out that there were various species of wallabies, and suggested that steps be taken to identify the harmful species, so that those not responsible for the damage might escape destruction.

Messrs. Crawford, Wickens, and Le Souef continued the discussion, and Mr. Aldrich added that, if the desire was to declare wallabies vermin throughout the State, he would offer strong opposition. He considered that if the marsupials were exterminated the dingo would become a bigger menace than ever.

After Mr. Male and Mr. Crawford had made further remarks, the motion "That Wallabies and Tammars be declared vermin in certain districts, these districts to be defined by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries and the Chief Inspector of Rabbits," moved by Mr. Crawford and second by Mr. Wickens, was carried.

#### IV.—Silver Eyes:

Mr. Crawford said that various Farmers' Associations and Boards had asked that silver eyes be declared vermin. Up to date he had not done so. Silver Eyes did a lot of damage to soft fruits at certain times of the year, but during the rest of the year they were almost entirely insectivorous. He did not therefore feel justified in declaring them vermin.

After the matter had been discussed by Messrs. Aldrich, Le Souef, Wickens and Clark, it was moved by Mr. Hamilton and seconded by Mr. Glauert "That no action be taken in regard to Silver Eyes at present, and that the stomachs of Silver Eyes should be examined for, say, a year, so that a fairly accurate account of the food supply of this particular species might be given." This was carried.

#### V.—Eagle-Hawks or Wedge-tailed Eagles:

Mr. Crawford said that eagle-hawks had been declared vermin some time ago. He met some members of the R.A.O.U. recently, the majority of whom said it was a mistake to have the eagle-hawks declared vermin.

Mr. Glauert proposed, and Mr. Le Souef seconded, "That the Eagle-Hawk be taken off the Vermin List."

After an animated discussion it was moved by Mr. Hamilton and seconded by Mr. Clark, "That Eagle-Hawks be allowed to remain on the Vermin List, and if possible further inquiries be made regarding their usefulness." This was carried after the previous motion had been withdrawn.

#### VI.—Parrots (the Twenty-eight and the W.A. Rosella or Yellow-cheeked Parroquet):

Mr. Crawford said a good many people had written about these parrots.

Mr. Glauert was of opinion that during the season of the year when there were no soft fruits these parrots did good by eating the seeds of weeds, etc.

After a discussion, in which Messrs. Crawford, Wickens, Male and Hamilton joined, it was moved by Mr. Crawford, and seconded by Mr. Wickens, "That the Twenty-eight Parrot and the Yellow-cheeked Parroquet (otherwise known as the West Australian Rosella) be declared vermin." Carried.

#### VII.—Goanna or Giant Lizard:

Mr. Aldrich said he was responsible for protecting the goanna by adding it to the Game List.

Mr. Crawford gave instances of finding four to six rabbits inside a goanna. He stated also that the bob-tailed lizard should be protected as it ate a great many insects.

Moved by Mr. Glauert, seconded by Mr. Clark, "That Goannas be protected." Carried.

#### VIII.—Butcher-birds and Squeakers (already protected):

Mr. Aldrich said that the butcher-bird was included in the Game Act.

Messrs. Wickens, Newman, Glauert, Aldrich and Hamilton joined in the discussion.

Moved by Mr. Clark, seconded by Mr. Glauert, "That the matter be left as it stands pending further investigations." Carried.

#### IX.—Doves:

Mr. Crawford said that doves, in and around Perth, were regular garbage eaters.

After a slight discussion it was decided to take no action.



X.—Emms:

Mr. Le Souef said that emus spread the zamia palm seeds in all directions, resulting in the poisoning of cattle.

A short discussion took place. Moved by Mr. Glauert, and seconded by Mr. Newman, "That the matter of the utility of the Emu be investigated." Carried.

Mr. Clark said that there were two or three questions untouched. It would be a good thing if the representatives could meet again to go further into the various subjects. Many things could be investigated in the meantime. At the end of 12 months, no doubt, it would be possible to speak definitely on many of the items brought before the conference. It was no good investigating a matter unless a committee or the whole of the conference sat frequently to deal with the work done.

Mr. Male considered the suggestion a good one. He thought that much good might be done if a recommendation were made to the Minister to make the conference a more or less permanent body, to meet at intervals. Committees could be appointed to conduct definite inquiries.

Mr. Glauert recommended the formation of a small committee to undertake the investigation of the stomach contents of birds. He was of opinion that it could be undertaken by members of the Conference. Mr. Newman and Mr. Clark could identify the insects and supply all information regarding them, and any information desired as to the identity of birds, etc., could be obtained from the Museum.

Mr. Hamilton said he was heartily in accord with the views of Mr. Clark and Mr. Glauert. There were men in Western Australia capable of doing very good work in these directions, and who were sufficiently enthusiastic to give a portion of their time to it. As settlement progressed we would find that these problems became more and more important. He thought a recommendation should be made to the Minister to form some kind of advisory body to assist in working out problems of this nature.

Mr. Aldrich supported Mr. Hamilton. He considered that a series of investigations should be carried out, extending over a considerable time.

The Hon. Mr. Baxter said first of all he wished to thank the gentlemen present who had come forward and made the conference such a success. In regard to the wild cat, they had come to a definite conclusion which would be helpful. They had supported the Department in the stand taken in regard to the goanna. He thought the Conference had been a very valuable one and trusted it was not going to be the last. Regarding the committee which

had been suggested, he welcomed the proposal, but considered that they should go a little further and decide upon the constitution of the committee that day. He was quite prepared to recognise the committee. He trusted that the members of the Conference had enjoyed the meeting as well as he had.

Mr. A. Male said that after hearing Mr. Baxter's remarks he thought that Mr. Clark's motion should be made a definite resolution, and that names for the proposed committee should be suggested.

It was moved by Mr. Hamilton, and seconded by Mr. Glauert, "That a small Committee be appointed, with power to add to their number, for the purpose of carrying on investigation work." Carried.

It was moved by Mr. Hamilton, and seconded by Mr. Le Souef, "That the following gentlemen form the Committee to initiate the work of investigation:—Messrs. Crawford, Male, Clark, Aldrich, and Glauert." Carried.

Moved by Mr. Aldrich, seconded by Mr. Crawford, "That Mr. Glauert be appointed convenor." Carried.

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